

श्री:

THIRUMALIRUNJOLAIMALAI

(SRI ALAGAR KOVIL)

STALA PURANA

PART I.

Introduction to the Stala Purana.

SRI:
PREFACE.

"Thirumalirunjolai" otherwise known as Then Thirup-Pathi was considere by the Great Alvars to be as great in sanctity and importance as the Sri Kshirabdi itself. As the head is considered to be the most important member of the body, so was this Thirumalirunjolai considered by the Great Alvars as the Head of all the Kshetras. Even Sri Vaikuntam and Sri Thiruvenkatam were only of secondary importance according to them. In the pre-Christian era this Stala was known as Thirumal Kunram, Irun-Kunram and by various other names. Great as has been the glory, sanctity and popularity of this most exalted place of worship and pligrimage, unlike other Stalas it had no single and distinct Stala Purana of its own! What went by the name of the "Thirumalirunjolai Stala Purana" was but a collection of references to this Stala in the Varaha, Brahmanda and Vamana Puranas and which is stated to have been collected by the Great Sage Sutha Puranika and expounded to the sages of the Naimisharanya as "Vrishabadhri Mahatmya".

It is indeed a fortunate feature that unlike the majority of the Stalas, this Kshetra possesses references right from the mystic Pauranic past down to the present day. The earliest Sangam works like the Paripadal, Pathuppattu, Silappadigaram etc. have very many absorbing and interesting references to this Stala. All the Alvars of the Vaishnavite hierarchy have visited the Stala and done Mangalasasanam here, and six of them have contributed 123 Pasurams to the Lord of this Kshetra.

Sri Udayavar's connection with this Stala has many interesting traditional episodes which have been noticed in their respective places in the Introductory Part.

Other works of Literature that bear upon this Stala or have particular references to this Stala and throwing ample light upon the greatness of this place, as far as available and possible, have been noticed in their appropriate places in the Introductory Part.

And above all, the wealth of inscriptional records of this place noticed in the Annual Report of South Indian Epigraphy has furnished a great amount of invaluable information which has thrown a flood of light upon the varying fortunes of this Fort and Temple City that have been closely linked with the fortunes of the Royal Houses of the Pandyas, Vijayanagar, the Banas etc. My thanks are due to Rao Bahadur Sri C. R. Krishnama Charlu B. A., Superintendent for Epigraphy for the facilities he has afforded this Devasthanam for taking notes of some of the inscriptions copied by the Epigraphical Department. I am also grateful to Sri V. Venkatasubba Aiyer of the Epigraphical Department for readily complying with my request to take copies of all the inscriptions in the Temple that were still left undeciphered by the Department.

Yet by far the most valuable and of immediate practical value to the Devasthanam would have been the Koil Olug and the various other Devasthanam records which went into the custody of the East India Company when the Government of this part of the country and the administration of this Devasthanam was assumed by the Government in 1799. When the Government divested themselves of the administration of the Devasthanam, these Records were not restored back to the Devasthanam. While the restoration of the records would have been of incalculable value and benefit to this Devasthanam and their retention by the then Government could have been of no practical use to them, their non-availability now is the more regrettable and unfortunate. An

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consequently I had to get on with the preparation of the history of the Stala without the help of these valuable and important records.

In the interests of this Institution and for the benefit of the pilgrim public and worshippers etc, it was deemed necessary and desirable to have this rare Stalapuranam known as "Vrishabadhri Mahatmya" published in Sanskrit with a translation of the same also therefor, and consequently I applied for the necessary sanction for their publication to the Hindu Religious Endowments Board of Madras. The H. R. E. Board were also pleased in their L. No. 35554/37/1C. dated 22—6—37 to accord me the necessary sanction for the printing of the Stalapurana and make it available for sale to the pilgrims, worshippers and others.

In the Board's Order No. 5083 dated 5—12—41 also, the Hindu Religious Endowments Board advised the publication of the History of this Stala embodying therein the important and special features of this temple. I am deeply thankful and grateful to the Board of Commissioners of the Hindu Religious Endowments, both past and present, for their enabling me to discharge this pious and sacred duty.

The publication has been unavoidably delayed owing to various administrative preoccupations and difficulties, and it has been the will of Providence to enable the completion of the work though somewhat late.

My enquiries into the existence and procurability of the Stalapurana proper for a long time did not bear fruit. When I was almost at the point of giving up the attempt an old and rare manuscript of this Stalapurana in Grantha characters and somewhat damaged and worn out in places was placed at my disposal by Sri Paramaswamy Battar, the Alangara Battar of this temple, who providentially found it amidst his ancestral

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heirlooms. The present edition is based mainly upon this manuscript. The late Sri Vijayendrachariar of Madura had a manuscript copy which consisted of chapters 1 to 6 only and which was made available to me. Though fragmentary, this also was very useful so far as it went for finding out the correct rendering of those portions of this Stalapurana.

There was another manuscript copy which was also unfortunately an incomplete one consisting only of 10 chapters of this Mahatmya and belonging to Sri Parthasarathy Iyengar of Akula Mannadu, Andhra Desa. He was kind enough to place this manuscript copy also at my disposal.

Very many of the great Eighteen Puranas now available in Bombay only represent what alone was made available to the Printers and Publishers there and they were in consequence not complete and exhaustive. Hence my attempt to verify these chapters of the Vrishabadri Mahatmya in the Bombay editions of the Vamana, Varaha, and Brahmanda Puranas did not bear out any fruit. Hence I had to depend for the publication of this Stalapurana mainly upon the three manuscripts mentioned above, which though coming from distinct persons and distant districts happily coincided to a substantial extent so far as they went. There were differences in readings in certain passages no doubt even amongst these three manuscripts which wherever I found them to be noteworthy, I have indicated in the foot notes

Since the manuscripts of the Stala Purana I was able to procure were in the Grantha characters, I had the same rendered into the Devanagari script so that it might be of universal use.

And for the benefit of the Tamil-knowing public, a translation in Tamil has been prepared for the Stalapurana which is printed as Part II of this work. The Tamil Translation of the Mahatmya was entrusted to Sahitya Siromani and

Sahitya Visaradha, Pandit Sri V. Venkatasubramania Sarma, chief Pandit of the Sri Sundararaja Gurukula at Alagar Hills. Brahma Sri Narayana Iyengar a learned Pandit and Bagavatar of Madura has also rendered valuable assistance in the Translation of the Mahatmya. I owe a word of apology for having kept the translation as close to the original as possible without making the language of the translation more readable and literary in which case the spirit of the original might have undergone a change that might not have been justified. I am thankful to these gentlemen for their kind and valuable help rendered in the Translation of the Mahatmya.

I am much indebted to Sri Paramaswamy Battar, the Srirangaraja Battar of this Temple, for his having placed at my disposal the rare cadjan leaf Grantha manuscript copy of the Sri Sundararaja Kavacham and the unique Ashtotharam of Sri Sundararaja for publication along with the Mahatmya, thereby placing the devout public under a deep debt of gratitude to him for bringing within their easy reach these rare gems of devotional literature. "Sundara Bahustavam" on Sri Sundararaja, a daily Parayana work for ardent and devout Sri Vaishnavas, the relevent Pasurams on Sri Sundararaja and this Stala by the ancient Alvars from the "Nalayira Divya Prabandam" and a few of the most important and ancient works on Lord Alagar and this sacred place, have also been added for the benefit of the devout readers.

The many and varied items of importance noticeable in this Stala, Historical, Religious, Cultural, Epigraphical and Archaeological have all been succinctly noticed in an Introductory Part which may interest the general scholar or student interested in research work. In the compilation of this Part of the work I am much indebted to the many valuable works noticed in the Bibliography annexed to this work.

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For the enhancement of the utility of this work, I request the readers of this Stalapurana to be kind enough to send in their useful suggestions and criticisms which will be thankfully received and incorporated in the next edition of this work.

The major portion of the photos published in the work has been taken by Sri Muthayya Pillai, a popular artist of Madura who has taken much interest in their neat and careful execution. For reproduction in this work, Sri Vaduvure K. Duraiswamy Ayyangar, our popular Novelist and Research Scholar has been kind enough to place at my disposal certain valuable sketches of the ancient Egyptian Emperors etc. wearing the Vaishnavite caste marks and published in his "Long Missing Links". I am much indebted to him for this valued help. The blocks have almost all been prepared by the Sri Vivekananda Press of Madura to whom also are my thanks due for their neat, prompt and attractive execution.

My thanks are also due in an abundant measure to Sri Harisamaya Divakaram Press of Madura and its pious proprietor Sri R. Ramanuja Alwar for their characteristic and unstinted zeal and earnestness with which they have carried out the whole printing of the work entrusted to them and in the satisfactory execution of which they have spared no pains.

I am profoundly grateful to Sri. C. Rajagopalachariar (Ex-Premier to the Government of Madras) for his generous kindness in contributing a valuable Foreword to this Stalapurana even in the midst of his very many great preoccupations that weigh heavily upon his hands at this critical period of the history of our Motherland.

Sri Kallalagar Devasthanam, }
MADURA, }
2—2—42. }

K. N. RADHA KRISHNA,

Executive Officer,

श्री:

FOREWORD.

How one wishes that our Stala Puranas were written by men who had more confidence in truth and depended less on pious propaganda! Yet this form of literature has served as one of the means whereby the culture and traditions of our land have been preserved, and the struggling historians of India are grateful even to the authors of these local exaggerations for furnishing some glimpses into the past which it is the Historians' work to unravel. The public, especially, the devout and the scholarly owe a deep debt of gratitude to Sri K. N. Radha Krishna who has spared no pains to bring out this valuable book on the famous Alagar temple near Madura. It is a matter for congratulation that in spite of difficulties the compiler has gathered a great deal of information which may help those who apply advanced methods of research in the work of diving into the past of a country wherein the muse of history has been sadly neglected in the past. Sri Radha Krishna has increased the usefulness of his publication by the inclusion of many very interesting plates and a plan of the temple topography. Alagar temple and the temple at Srirangam are two ancient pagodas of the South which served as forts as well as places of worship. The tradition of "Padinettampadi Karuppan" in the Alagar temple unfolds to us a grand achievement of compromise. Our forefathers knew how to gather people to their standard. The Kallars were made the guardians of the fort of Alagar temple. The sacred ash distributed in this Vaishnava temple shows the possibility of catholicity that were foreseen long ago in spite of severe sectarian divisions.

Sri Radha Krishna has asked me to write a foreward. I can see no reason or merit in me for this request except that the Alagar temple was opened to the Harijans along with the other great temple in Madura dedicated to Sri Meenakshi Amman, and I am mixed up with this movement of reform.

31st January, 1942.

C. Rajagopalachari.

SRI:

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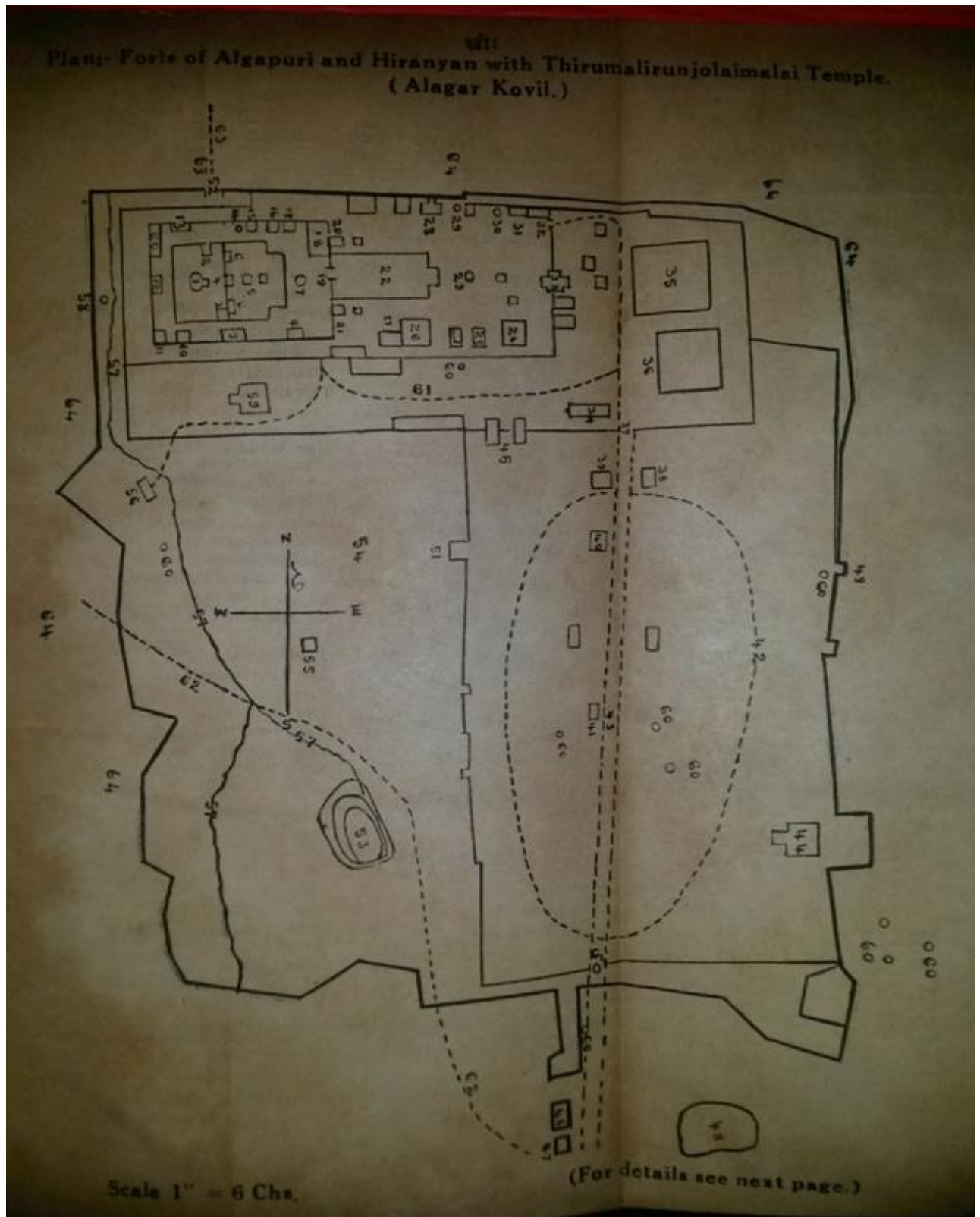
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